

*The young struggling for survival from exclusion and boredom in the deadly atmosphere of the ghettos of the eighties are in fact among the most advanced elements in the class struggle. As such they find themselves surrounded by a sea of hostility and incomprehension, even by those who should be their comrades in struggle.*



# BREAKING OUT OF THE GHETTO

*Jean Weir and  
Alfredo Bonanno*

This is not as absurd as it seems. The combatant party puts itself within the logic of destabilising the existing ruling power for the construction of a future power that is different in form but identical in substance.

In this project, as soon as it is realised that there is no outlet for a military confrontation, they make a deal. The amnesty that is being talked about so much in Italy today with the Red Brigades is one such deal.

As we can see, while simple anarchist critique—radical and total in content—always remains “illegal”, even the armed struggle of the combatant parties can at a given moment enter the domain of “legality”. That clearly demonstrates the “fluctuating” nature of legality and the State’s capacity to adapt this to levels of social control.

#### *The exercise of control*

The instruments of repression only use brute force minimally. They function preventively to a far greater extent as instruments of social control.

This is applied through a series of provisions for all the forms of potential illegality and deviant behaviour.

Potential illegality comes within the law today, but the far-seeing eye of the censor looks ahead to foresee its possible outcome. In the same way social deviance today might be a possible object of study or surprise, tomorrow it could become a concrete manifestation of social subversion.

*Alfredo M. Bonanno*

This shows that the line between “formal” legality and that “real” legality fluctuates according to the repressive projects being put into act.

It varies according to the relationship between State and capital at a given time, and this is established less through recourse to precise laws than through a myriad of controls and dissuasions that only evolve into actual repressive actions in specific cases.

### *Relation between politics and illegality*

Basically all political critique remains within the field of legality. In fact it bolsters the social fabric and allows it to overcome certain defects and deficiencies caused by capital’s contradictions and some excessively rigid aspects of the State.

But no political critique can reach the total negation of State and capital. If it did it would become a social critique—as in the case of anarchist critique—and would cease to be a constructive contribution to the institutional fabric, and so become “illegal”.

Periods of institutional and social equilibrium can exist that allow the existence of a social critique of a radically anarchist nature, but that does not alter the substantially “illegal” character of this critique.

On the other hand, even behaviour that comes heavily under the jurisdiction of the penal code can be considered differently in the light of a relationship of a political kind. For example, the armed struggle of a combatant party is undoubtedly an illegal action in the formal sense of the word, but at a given moment it can become functional to the State and capital’s projects of recuperation and restructuring. It ensues that an agreement between combatant party and State is not impossible.

# BREAKING OUT OF THE GHETTO

Jean Weir &  
Alfredo Bonanno

Originally published in *Insurrection* issue 4, May 1988.

### *Illegality*

---

Simply spreading facts that have been distorted or concealed by the institutional information system constitutes an “illegal” action. Not against one precise law (except in the case of the so-called “State-secret”), but something that goes against the management of social control on which the State’s very possibility of having its laws respected is based.

A wide area of behaviour exists therefore that attracts the attention of the State’s repressive organs just as much, if not more, than that which clearly breaks a specific law.

It can be extremely damaging to the project of State control for certain news to be in circulation at a given moment, at least as damaging as actions falling into the “illegal” category.

all where the real enemy lies. This happened in the Brixton riots for example where parents, seeing the police brutality at close hand, immediately moved from a tacit consensus to open antagonism towards them.

Maintaining consensus from people who have very little to gain from the “social order” involves a complex network of media, social workers, school teachers, community leaders, community police, etc, all of whom are recognised as being in positions of authority. That authority is tolerated unwillingly today. It could break down completely tomorrow.

Our work must therefore be in the direction of continually clarifying and extending the class attack by identifying and striking objectives that are easily attainable and comprehensible in the perspective of breaking down the walls of the ghettos and opening up a perspective of mass action against the common enemy.

*Jean Weir*

*Breaking out of the ghetto*

---

The struggles taking place in the inner city ghettos are often misunderstood as mindless violence. The young struggling against exclusion and boredom are advanced elements of the class clash. The ghetto walls must be broken down, not enclosed.

The young Palestinians throwing stones at the Israeli army rightly have the sympathy and solidarity of comrades who see them in their just struggle for freedom from their colonial oppressors. When we see even the very young of Belfast throwing stones at British soldiers we have no doubt about their rebellion against the occupying army whose tanks and barbed wire enclose their ghettos.

There is an area of young people today however who find themselves in just as hard a battle against their oppressors, who find themselves constantly marginalised and criminalised. These young people do not find themselves fighting a liberation struggle against an external invader, but are immersed in an internal class struggle that is so mystified that its horizons are unclear even to themselves. This war is taking place within what have come to be known as the “inner cities” of Britain, areas that are now recognised by the class enemy—the capitalists, with the monarchy leading, and the State in all its forms—as the most fragile part of the class society, one that could open up the most gigantic crack and give way to unprecedented violence.

The young struggling for survival from exclusion and boredom in the deadly atmosphere of the ghettos of the eighties are in fact among the most advanced elements in the struggle in Britain.

As such they find themselves surrounded by a sea of hostility and incomprehension, even by those who in terms of their official class positions should be their comrades in struggle. No trade union or left wing party has anything to say about their struggle. They are among the first to criminalise it and relegate its protagonists to the realm of social deviance, perhaps with the distinguishing variable that instead of the short sharp shock treatment they prefer to employ an army of soft cops and social psychiatrists.

The anarchist movement itself, anti-authoritarian by definition and revolutionary in perspective, has so far produced nothing tangible as a project of struggle which encompasses the “real” anarchists, the visceral anti-authoritarians. The forms the violence from the ghettos takes does not have the content of moral social activity that anarchists want to find. This cannot emerge spontaneously from situations of brute exploitation such

as exist in the urban enclosures. Suggestions such as those of taking this morality into the ghettos which are then to be defended and “self-managed” in our opinion are quite out of place. They ring of the old “Takeover the City” slogans of Lotta Continua years ago, now just as dead as that organisation itself. The problem is not self-managing the ghettos, but breaking them down. This can only come about through clear indications of a class nature, indicating objectives in that dimension and acting to extend the class attack.

The article by the Plymouth comrades<sup>1</sup> gives an indication of what is happening in most major-and many smaller cities in Britain today. These events do not reach the headlines. In fact most of what happens is not reported at all.

Clearly the conditions of the clash are very different to those where the presence of a tangible “outside enemy” has clarified the position of the whole of the exploited against the common enemy. There is no doubt in Sharpeville or Palestine or Belfast about what happens to those who collaborate with the police. In this country on the contrary, the fact that the latter have made inroads into gaining the active collaboration of people within the ghettos themselves shows the barriers of fear and incomprehension that exist and divide the exploited in one area.

Levels of cultural and social mystification have succeeded to some extent in confusing class divisions. By defining the violence of the young in pathological or ethnic terms the latter find themselves isolated and ostracised even by those who are nearest to them in terms of exploitation.

The dividing line is a fine one, however, and it can take only a mass confrontation with the ‘forces of order’ to demonstrate to

<sup>1</sup> This text originally appeared alongside “Mini Riots in Plymouth” briefly describing a recent history of unrest in the English city.